

A Realistic Look at the Millennium

Feast of Tabernacles

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Brethren, we all know that we are here keeping the Feast of Tabernacles as we do every year in accordance with God's commandments. If we look at the way we keep the Feast of Tabernacles versus the way that Ancient Israel typically kept the Feast of Tabernacles, there are significant differences between the two.

Last year, Mr. Railston gave a sermon on the first day of the feast, covering one of these major differences. He talked about the temporary dwellings that Ancient Israel would make out of branches, and they would live in them during the Feast of Tabernacles. That's typically not something we do today in our observance of the feast.

Another major difference, in terms of how we keep the feast versus how Ancient Israel did, involved animal sacrifices. If you look back at how Ancient Israel did it, that was an important part of not only how they kept the Feast of Tabernacles, but how they kept all the holy days throughout the year. It was an important component.

What we're going to learn today is that, if we look at the specific details of how they kept the animal sacrifices during the Feast of Tabernacles, we can learn an important lesson that teaches us about how these days will play out when they are fulfilled in the future, when we get to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. One of the lessons this teaches us is to take a realistic look at the Millennium. The title of this sermon is:

A Realistic Look at the Millennium

That title will make more sense as we get further into the sermon. This gives you an idea of where we're going.

We're not going to take the time to turn to Leviticus, chapter 23. I'm sure most all of us are familiar with that. It tends to be one of our go-to chapters when it comes to the holy days, because it lists them all and tells us the holy day plan of God. As you read through that chapter, one of the things you will see as it covers each one of the holy days is that there's a general statement each time it's talking about a holy day. It says, "*You shall make an offering made by fire unto the Lord.*" In most cases, it doesn't give any further details, it just makes that particular statement. It's referring to the animal sacrifices as an important part of how they kept the entire holy day plan.

Today we'll look at some of the specific details, particularly regarding the Feast of Tabernacles and the offerings they did and what that teaches us. Numbers 28 and 29 give us the details of the animal sacrifices that were done throughout the holy days. Just to set the scene, let me put a context on the situation here. Hebrews, chapter 9 tells us that the entire sacrificial system was instituted for the purpose of symbolism. It

was a symbolic system that actually pointed towards Jesus Christ. It teaches us important lessons about the necessity of Jesus Christ to come and to die as a perfect sacrifice for us to be able to atone for our sins and enable us to have the opportunity to receive the holy spirit and salvation, and to be potentially born into God's kingdom. As Hebrews 9 tells us, that was instituted until the reformation. That's the way it's worded. That means, until Jesus Christ came and actually became the true sacrifice to cover our sins. If you look at the general symbolism there, the animal sacrifices involved killing various animals and sacrificing them. The symbolism demonstrates the fact that the shedding of blood is needed for the remission of sins. But understand that this is in the Old Testament when they were doing this. It was a symbolic atonement, a symbol that taught us about the need for Jesus Christ to come and be the sacrifice.

As Hebrews explains, the blood of bulls and goats and rams could never atone for sin. It even tells us that it wasn't even a possibility for that to happen. What this does is teach us about the blood of Jesus Christ to come as a perfect savior because His blood literally does atone for our sins and enables us to be born into His kingdom. As I said, this was until the reformation, until Jesus Christ came. So, when He came and fulfilled this, the sacrificial system ended. Christ becomes the fulfillment and the symbolism pointed to Him. Not only does that end that system, it's also the transition between the two covenants. You'll see, also stated in Hebrews, it says, "*He removes the old that He may establish the new.*" That's basically the dividing line of the systems, it's where one stops and the other starts. That's how they are radically different. This explains the reason why they were doing animal sacrifices at the feast and we are not. That old system ended.

As I mentioned, this is all about symbolism. That's the big picture, you might say, in terms of symbolism taught by this whole system. Not only is there a big picture here, if you dig deeper into the specific details, there's lots of lessons we can learn from that symbolism as well. That's what we're going to do today. We'll dig a little deeper and learn some specific lessons.

We're not going to take the time to go through all of chapters 28 and 29. That covers all the holy days and all the sacrifices that were done. I'm going to summarize some details that will teach the lesson that I mentioned before, our realistic look at the Millennium. To summarize this, you see an interesting picture if you put this on a chart. I don't have a chart, but I will explain so you can picture this in your mind.

The main animal sacrifices were done throughout all of the holy days, as explained in Leviticus, *An offering made by fire*. There were two main components to this. There was a burnt offering and a sin offering. These were done through all the holy days during the year. The numbers we will see of these components is what teaches us an important lesson.

If we look at the sin offering, that one is consistent throughout all of the holy days. It's one goat. If you look at this on a chart, it's consistent all the way through Unleavened Bread to the Last Great Day.

Now the burnt offering was a bit more complicated. This is what we will focus on today. It was a combination of animals. It was always a combination of bulls, rams and lambs. These three were utilized. When you look at this visually, it kind of screams at you. The numbers are pretty consistent throughout all of the holy days with the exception of the Feast of Tabernacles. When you look at it on a chart, it becomes apparent how different these numbers are. For most of the holy days, they're almost identical in terms of how it is done.

For the spring holy days, Unleavened Bread and for Pentecost, the numbers are the same. It's 2, 1 and 7; two bulls, one ram and seven lambs. That's consistent for all of Unleavened Bread and for Pentecost.

When you get to the fall holy days, you have consistency as well, with the exception of the Feast of Tabernacles. With Trumpets and the Last Great Day, the numbers are 1, 1 and 7. It's one bull, one ram and seven lambs. That's consistent for all of the fall holy days. There's just a slight difference there.

When you get to the Feast of Tabernacles, the numbers are different. We'll see an important lesson when we analyze it. It starts off on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles with thirteen bulls, two rams and fourteen lambs. The numbers jump up significantly. Here is the interesting part, if you go through the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, what you're going to find is the numbers of the rams and lambs stay consistent for all seven days. The number of the bulls is not. It starts off with thirteen bulls and it decreases by one every day as you go through the Feast of Tabernacles. You start off with thirteen on the first day, and you wind down to seven on the seventh day.

We will see there's a lesson in all of this. Notice this from the Bible. I'm going to skip through this because we don't want to get bogged down with all the finer details. What I want you to notice is the number of these bulls, because that's the important lesson we will look at.

Numbers 29:12. *'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work, and you shall keep a feast to the LORD seven days.*

13) You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the LORD ... (NKJV)

That's the statement you typically see throughout Leviticus 23.

13b) ... thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year. They shall be without blemish. (NKJV)

Again, notice. 13, 2 and 14 are the numbers. Now go to verse 17.

17) *'On the second day present twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, (NKJV)*

Now go to verse 20.

20) *'On the third day present eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish,*

23) *'On the fourth day present ten bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year, without blemish,*

26) *'On the fifth day present nine bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish,*

29) *'On the sixth day present eight bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish,*

32) *'On the seventh day present seven bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, (NKJV)*

As I mentioned, the number of the rams and lambs stays the same throughout the entire feast. The number of the bulls does not. It steadily decreases. We're going to focus on the lesson we learn from these bulls.

Let's notice again that we have this decreasing number of bulls throughout. Let's also point out one other detail. If you're like me and you live in a large metropolitan area, you live in a city environment. As far as your world is concerned, food comes from the grocery store. You're not really in touch with farming and agriculture and that kind of thing. So, it's easy for us to look at this and it's all just numbers. It's about types of animals and numbers.

Let's paint a little bit more of a picture here. We want to understand how significant the number of bulls is in this, and why the other two don't change. I'm going to give some "ballpark" numbers, and all I'm trying to do is paint a picture to understand the proportions. A full-grown bull can be about 2,000 pounds or more. It's a very large animal. A ram is an adult male sheep, and weighs around 200 pounds. A lamb is around 100 pounds.

What I'm trying to point out is, think about this in terms of proportions. There's a size difference, but it's not just the weight and the amount of meat. If you're a farmer, the financial aspect of what you are offering is significant. You can see how that would play out as well. What I want you to see is that one bull, in terms of meat and financial value, equals the combination of all the others. The two rams and fourteen lambs is about consistent with what one bull would be worth, or in terms of the weight of the meat. In that regard, when we're dropping the bulls and the others are consistent, you have this major change each time.

So, what does all this mean? What is the lesson we are to learn here? First of all, we must understand the significance of the symbolism that is involved with the burnt offering. To look at that, let's turn to Leviticus, chapter 1. As mentioned prior at this

feast, the first several chapters of Leviticus go through the various types of animal sacrifices and offerings that were done and explains them in detail. Chapter 1 specifically addresses the burnt offering. What we want to see here is, what did this symbolize? What is the lesson?

Leviticus 1:1. *Now the LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying,*

2) *“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the livestock—of the herd and of the flock.*

3) *‘If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD.*

4) *Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. (NKJV)*

Verse 4 is what we’re going to focus on. This was a symbolic atonement for the people. As I said, it was mentioned before that the blood of bulls and rams could not literally cover sin or atone for that. It was a symbol that was pointing towards Jesus Christ.

As you know, there were various types of animal sacrifices. The burnt offering was the general atonement for sin. As I mentioned previously, there was a burnt offering and a sin offering involved in the holy days on every single day. Let’s just briefly understand the significance between the two. This will help to characterize it in your mind. We won’t go through Leviticus, chapter 4. That’s the one that covers the meaning of the sin offering. Just notice this one detail. If you look at that chapter, one of the things you will notice regarding the sin offering, it specifically mentions that it is for unintentional sin. In other words, that is a situation where you made a mistake, but you weren’t intending to. This isn’t an issue of rebellion or a bad attitude or that type of thing. This is something you did. “Oops, I messed up. I didn’t mean to.” It was just a human oversight. That’s what the sin offering was for.

The burnt offering is a general atonement for sin. Another quick detail I would mention, the priesthood and/or the person who actually did the killing, would oftentimes be able to partake of part of that offering, depending upon the type of offering it was. That was typical in most cases. For the burnt offering, though, this was completely to God. Nobody else got to enjoy the meat. This was completely burned up and given to God as an offering. It is because this is the general atonement for sin.

Let’s put this puzzle together. What is the lesson here? If this is the general atonement for sin, that’s what this symbolizes, and throughout the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, God is requiring less and less of the offerings they give as a general atonement for sin. You can kind of see what the lesson is here. We’re talking about basically less and less need to atone for sin. Doesn’t that correlate with less and less sin that needs to be atoned for?

What's happening is, you can see through this thousand-year period. You have a culture that will get more and more in line with God's instructions. That's why I call this a realistic view of the Millennium. We look forward to the wonderful promises of the Millennium and all that will happen. Often I think we look at it from the perspective of an instantaneous transformation. We expect Christ to come down to the Mount of Olives, take control and suddenly perfection ensues. Everyone is completely in line with God from that point on. That is not realistic. This is basically what the lesson of the bulls is telling us. It's telling us that, as you go forward throughout this time period, less and less is required to atone for sin because people are getting more and more in line with God's instructions and more obedient. The culture is getting farther and farther away from this world dominated by Satan and getting more in line with following God. That's the lesson that is playing out here. As I mentioned, we tend to look at it from a perspective of an instantaneous transformation, because we are looking at it through our eyes in terms of how we will experience it. It's important to make this distinction for this message, because we tend to look at things as how we will experience it.

To have a realistic view, we should see it through the eyes of the people who will live through the day of the Lord and will start the Millennium and how they will experience it. I think we tend to look at it as instantaneous because of how we will experience it. We know that if we're successful in our Christian lives and qualify for God's kingdom, we're part of the first resurrection. We know, from 1 Corinthians 15, that it describes an instantaneous transformation. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye you're changed from flesh to spirit. All your physical problems go away. You're now a God being and everything is great. That's how we think of it. That is not the experience these people will have. Often I think we have an unrealistic view of how this will play out, because we're focused on how positive it's going to be, which it is, but we kind of jump over reality in terms of how it will really take place.

Throughout my lifetime, even a lot of friends I know today in various Church of God organizations, when you get around this time of year, they're talking about the fulfillment of the fall holy days and all that is ahead of us. You hear in the conversation that the picture they have in their mind is that Trumpets gets fulfilled and Christ and the firstfruits come down to the Mount of Olives and perfection ensues from that point forward. That is not even remotely realistic.

Revelation 19 is the chapter that tells us about Jesus Christ coming down on the white horse, the firstfruits with Him, down to the Mount of Olives. What does the rest of the chapter say? There's a battle that takes place because armies are down there, ready to fight to the death, and still rebelling against God. It's not by any means peace and safety and wonderful from that point on.

The Bible doesn't tell us exactly how long that battle lasts, but it gives us a summary. Consider a few concepts. The Feast of Trumpets, as we know, is on the first day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. The Day of Atonement, that pictures the binding of Satan, is the tenth day of the seventh month. There is a nine-day gap in there. I can assure you, that is there for a reason. I don't suggest, by any means, that I

have all the answers as to what takes place in that span of time. Satan doesn't even get taken out of the picture until the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. You've got to get to that before you even start changing all the rebellion.

When does the Feast of Tabernacles start? It starts on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. It's a five-day gap. Again, it's in there for a reason. Logically, look at it like this: We know from the description of the day of the Lord that the earth is just obliterated by the time this all plays out. It gets to the point that, if God didn't intervene soon, the earth wouldn't be able to support life. We also know from the description of the Millennium, how the earth is described. It's a wonderful Garden of Eden environment. At some point, there is supernatural intervention to heal all of this. Again, it's just my opinion, that it plays out in the five-day period in between these two.

Examine the entire holy day plan. From Unleavened Bread to the Last Great Day, it's a seven-month period. You know what number seven is to God. That is no accident. That is established purposely. He didn't take a calendar, throw darts at it and randomly pick some dates and lay everything down. If you look at how the holy days are appointed, in every circumstance except one, there are days, if not weeks or months interspersed in between them. Those are there for a reason. The only exception we have for that is when we get to the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, and after sundown, it's the Last Great Day. That's the only time where it tells us that we go from one event to the other. In every other case, we have these gaps. They are there for a reason.

Don't think of this as: Trumpets is fulfilled; Christ and the firstfruits come down to the Mount of Olives, and perfection ensues. That is not even close to reality.

When the Feast of Tabernacles has been fulfilled, you get to the Millennium starting that fifteenth day of the seventh month. This idea that everyone just jumps in line and obeys God and all is perfect going forward is not even close to reality. I can prove that to you.

Zechariah 14:17. *And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain.*

18) If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (NKJV)

I think oftentimes we read this and kind of skip over it and don't appreciate the magnitude of what we're being told here. I have to admit I've been guilty of that very thing. We read over this and think that even in the Millennium there will be a few boneheaded rebels over in the corner, not fully cooperating with God. We have this picture that ninety percent of the people will fall into line with just a few holdouts. That does not express what this is telling us.

Let's spend a little time analyzing the picture of what this is telling us. First of all, what is the reference? We're talking about people refusing to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Put that in the context of your current life. Think of all the things we are required to do in our obedience to God. There are a number of things that God commands us to do that are rather difficult sometimes, aren't they? There are things we may really like to do and our carnal human nature is attracted to it, and we have to decide to give that up. Perhaps we have to make ourselves do things that God commands that we may not want to do, and we have to exercise self-discipline and make ourselves do it. Sometimes it's enduring through difficult situations and having to bite our tongue and fight our human nature to do what's right. These things can be a struggle at times.

Coming to the Feast of Tabernacles typically doesn't fall into that category, does it? Think about it. How hard is it to talk somebody into this? God wants us to take a week off of work and get away from all the stress and trials and difficulties that you face. Get away from all of that, come to a nice location and enjoy a week away. We're going to save extra money so we can really have a good time. We can stay at good accommodations, eat better food, enjoy special things and do activities, and fellowship with nice people. Above all, God commands us to have a good time. God wants us to rejoice and make sure that this is a highlight and something you like. How difficult is it to talk someone into doing that? This is the easy fun part of obeying God. It's the highlight of the year.

If there are people saying, "Forget it. I ain't doing the easy fun part of obeying God." What does that tell you about all the other things? It kind of tells you where they're at. They're basically thumbing their noses at God.

Notice the reference of what we just read. It specifically mentions the nation of Egypt. However, it doesn't conclusively say that Egypt is going to do this. It says "if" Egypt refuses, this shall be their punishment. Notice that it's framed in the context of an entire nation. He says that He will punish an entire nation if this nation is taking this approach. We're talking about nations where at least the majority, if not all of them have this attitude. Also, notice the last scripture we read, this is going to be the punishment of all the nations (plural) that take this approach. So, it talks about multiple nations saying, "Nope, I'm not even going to do the easy and fun part of obeying God. I'm doing my own thing."

That isn't typically how we picture the Millennium, is it? We picture Christ setting this up and everybody is in line and doing it perfectly. That is not at all what this says.

We can also put a time reference on this as well. Look back at verse 16.

Zechariah 14:16. *And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem ... (NKJV)*

It says, *everyone who is left*. What generation is it talking about? It's the first generation that starts the Millennium. Those are the survivors of the day of the Lord who actually lived over into the start of the Millennium.

Another interesting detail to look at is that it qualifies this as, *all the nations that came against Jerusalem*. We won't take the time to read the earlier part of this chapter, but if you read the first couple verses of chapter 14, one of the things you will see is that all the nations of the earth come against Jerusalem. He's basically saying that of all the survivors of the day of the Lord who live over in the beginning of the Millennium, of that group (everyone who is still alive) there will be a number of nations not cooperating. They're refusing to do the easy fun stuff. That tells you where their attitude is and what they're going through.

Again, this is the lesson of the bulls. You need thirteen on the first day, and you gradually decrease as you go. We will see, over time, the people will get more and more in line with following God's instructions. This is how this plays out.

If you think about this, and take a realistic view, we see that this type of situation would happen, and it would play out over generations. Often I think we look at this situation through our eyes. Think about the reality of what influences your perspective of all of these events. Most of us have been coming to the Feast of Tabernacles for decades. You've been studying these events, you look forward to them, you understand the overall picture, and you excitedly look forward to its fulfillment. You want to see all of this happen.

Even when you see all of these horrific events, what are we focused on? This is going to take us to all the good that is beyond this. You understand all of this and look at it as a mature Christian.

That is not the experience of these people. That is not how they will experience it. They will go through the day of the Lord period, being deceived human beings who didn't have their eyes open. They don't even have Satan's veil removed until the Day of Atonement.

Don't think of it in terms of how we understand this. Look at it from their perspective. It's important that we see it through their eyes to have a view of reality. Our perspective is about Christ returning and the start of the Millennium, and we see it as a great event.

We will see that the take-away from this sermon kind of ties in with the concept of judgment. About not getting into one ditch or the other. If you look at the responsibility of judgment that the firstfruits will have, the firstfruits will judge the rest of mankind. If you judge people according to an unrealistic standard, what are you doing to them? That's a setup for failure, isn't it? It's unjust, it's cruel and it sets people up for failure. We need to have a realistic view of what their experience was like so we are not judging them, comparing them to a standard that's outside the realm of reality. That is not fair.

To understand this, let's first take a look at the culture that will have shaped these individuals. They are not converted Christians that are mature and coming to the Feast of Tabernacles for decades. That is simply not their experience. We must realize that. 2 Timothy, chapter 3 gives a description of what the culture is like at the time of the end.

The people who will be going through the day of the Lord and beyond this, their whole existence has been in this culture. That's what has framed their perspective of life, how they view all of this and where they're at as individuals.

2 Timothy 3:1. *But know this, that in the last days, perilous times will come. (NKJV)*

This is the last generation that's going to experience these events.

*2) For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
3) unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, [notice that]
4) traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,
5) having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (NKJV)*

Notice the reference to "despisers of good." We get a graphic picture here. These things describe sinful behavior, but we've all seen individuals that don't want to give up their sinful way of life, but they're also kind of decent in some other ways. They're trying to live a moral life the best they understand. As I mentioned before, they're not in the good box or the bad box. This is a culture pretty much in the bad box. We are talking about those that literally despise good. They're way beyond just being involved in sin and liking those temporary pleasures. If you literally despise good, that tells you how warped their perspectives are. These people will have grown up in this culture. This will have shaped their view of life and shaped who they are as individuals. That's very important to understand. This is before we even begin to introduce the reality of the day of the Lord, because this was their experience and then they go through the most horrific events that have ever taken place in the history of mankind. These events are so severe and traumatic it is hard to wrap our heads around it.

When you read Revelation, and the graphic details of the day of the Lord, it's hard to imagine all of this. We think of disasters from a regional standpoint. We don't experience global disasters. We experience hurricanes or tsunamis or tornados or whatever, and it's a limited area. We have destruction over there, but the rest of the world isn't facing that. We read that these are global issues. That is hard to imagine, isn't it? It's hard to understand what this would be like.

Understand, this is what these people will have come through at the start of the Millennium, and we must understand what this will do to them and how they will be affected. We must have realistic expectations of how to rule these people and to judge them during this time. If we judge them with the point of view of: "You should just embrace all of this, as great as we think it is." That is a setup for failure. That would be cruel. We've got to be real about this.

I'm not going to go through all the graphic detail of the day of the Lord. If you want to read those, they are in Revelation, chapters 8, 9, and 16. That walks you through all of the trumpet plagues and gives you the details of how this will turn out.

As was mentioned earlier, by the time this all plays out, the vast majority of mankind will be dead. These are just ballpark numbers, so don't attach any great significance to this, but we're looking at a population in the hundreds of millions who will survive. Compare that to the planet today that has over seven billion. It's a tiny fragment of people that actually live through all of this into the day of the Lord.

We need to appreciate the effect all of this can have on a person and what these people will be going through by the time they get to the Millennium. With those populations, going from seven-plus billion to maybe a few hundred million that live, that is massive. That means, if you are a survivor of the day of the Lord and you've lived into the Millennium, the vast majority of people that you know are gone. You lost most all of them.

As Isaiah tells us, the day of the Lord lasts a year. It's a twelve-month period. Keep in mind all that's going to happen to these people in a twelve-month period and the emotional and psychological effects that can have on a person. That's our picture of reality. As I mentioned, the effects of the day of the Lord are so massive, it is difficult for us to comprehend it. It's easy to just gloss over that.

Let me paint a picture to help you relate to this. I'm sure many of you, at some point in your life, you've lost someone who was significant to you. You had a family member, a close friend, and they died. You probably went through a grieving process as a result, especially if that person was important and close to you. That would be difficult to deal with, and it probably took time to go through that process. You had to deal with emotions, and probably went through what is commonly called "the stages of grief" and went through an emotional rollercoaster in dealing with that. If that person was an active part of your day-to-day life, a spouse, a child, a parent, you probably not only grieved, but you went through a process where you were redefining your life. That person played a role in your life and now they're gone. This took some time to deal with.

For a number of you, over a period of years, you've lost several individuals that were important in your life. In all probability, this was one individual at a time, spaced out over numerous years. At one time, you lost someone significant, and you coped with that, and then went on with your life. Later, you lost someone else. These losses were spaced out, and you dealt with each one as you went forward.

Now picture this. Put all of that together in a twelve-month period and lose them all. Now multiply it exponentially, because it's not a number of people you can count on your hand or your fingers, it's the majority of people you know. It is most of your family, your friends, and your casual acquaintances. They are all ripped away from you in a twelve-month period. In a number of cases, you may have witnessed their death in

some gruesome, horrific manners. You have emotional issues with that as well, because you saw all of this. You're trying to cope with all of that. Imagine the emotions you're going through, the stages of grief, and one of the big ones being anger.

But we're not done. During that same twelve-month period, most everything that is familiar to you and your life is ripped away from you. Think about it; if you go through the day of the Lord and the planet is just torn to pieces, literally to the point that if God doesn't intervene soon, the earth will not sustain life. That means everything familiar in your world has been taken away from you. You've lost your home, your neighborhood, your career, everything that is familiar to your world has been ripped away from you along with all those people, in a twelve-month period. It's overwhelming.

Think about this as well. For human beings, change tends to equal stress. If you've ever taken one of those assessments that measures your probability for health problems and other things because of stress, it asks you a lot of questions like: Have you lost a job or started a new job; have you sold a home or bought a home; have you gotten married or divorced, etc. These are major life events, but you will notice that some of those things are positive. However, they are major change, and that can be stressful.

How do human beings react to a lot of change in a short period of time, when our whole environment is changing? We get stressed, don't we? Oftentimes our reaction to that can be edgy, grumpy and irritable because we're trying to cope with the changes in our world. Put all this together. Not only have you lost the vast majority of people in your life, and you're grieving and trying to cope with that, you have literally lost everything in your world that is familiar to you. By the time this is done, you don't even get to speak the same language anymore. There is absolutely nothing familiar in your world. This is overwhelming stress, isn't it? Is it even remotely realistic that we can think that, "Yes, Christ and the firstfruits will come down to the Mount of Olives and everything is peaceful from there going forward, and people will totally embrace this and jump on board." Think about it through their eyes. They live through all of this as deceived, carnal human beings. They haven't been coming to the Feast of Tabernacles for years. They don't understand the things that we know and take for granted. That's not their perspective. They are deceived, carnal human beings who have lived through all of this, and the veil from Satan is not even removed until the Day of Atonement. How have they experienced all of this? They have gone about their lives in a culture that despises good. That has framed their existence and all they know is that their world got turned upside down and inside out. Everything they know got ripped away.

Also, consider this. While all of this was going on, the two witnesses were on the scene. They have been repeatedly informing them, "This is the wrath of God. God is the individual responsible for your world being torn apart." Look at it through the eyes of a carnal human being. Of course, the two witnesses are telling them that they need to repent, and if they repent, life will go a lot better for them. They are refusing to do this.

Don't look at this as a mature Christian, but rather as a carnal human being. What you understand is the pain. You're not seeing the spiritual perspective of ultimate good coming out of this. Your world is coming apart, and there are two guys on the scene, performing miracles and telling you, "This is the wrath of God, and God and His family are the ones doing this to you."

Then God shows up. He comes down out of the sky on a white horse, and He brings a lot of His friends with Him. They come down to the Mount of Olives and they proceed to kill a whole lot more people. Again, you're looking at this through the eyes of a carnal human being. You're saying, "These guys are coming down and killing more of my friends, and they're stomping out anyone who resists them. Then they take control of the world, and now they're demanding us to worship them. Can you believe that?"

Can you imagine how they might have a few issues with this and find it hard to cope? Can we now understand why we would have a situation where there are some nations trying to cooperate with God, and there are others saying, "Forget it. I don't care if the feast is a week of fun and enjoyable. I'm not coming up there to worship the individuals that tore my world apart. This family of God that took away everything familiar in my world, killed all of my friends and family and did all this to me, and now you want me to worship you? Are you kidding?" Again, we're looking at it through the eyes of a carnal human being. You can imagine that's how they would feel.

Now you can see realistically why you've got a picture of nations (plural) who are saying, "Nope, we're not going to do it." It's going to take them time to adjust, to process, to get through all of this. This is how it actually starts off.

Over time, as we can see, this gets better and better as we go through the Millennium. Think about it like this. We know this period is a thousand years long. The Bible is clear about that. It's pictured by seven days. Take a thousand and divide it by seven. We are just using rough numbers to make it easy. You're going to get a little over 140 years for every day. You can kind of see how this symbolism is teaching how this transitions as you go forward. To be realistic, we have to realize that we will have some trouble starting off.

As was mentioned earlier, you don't use the rod of iron on traumatized people who are trying to cope with all of this. You use the rod of iron on the people that brought the tanks and M16's and they're trying to shoot God. They're actively rebelling. You don't beat up on people who are traumatized and stressed out from all of this. Yes, they're copping an attitude. You show them some patience. Yes, that attitude has to go, but let's also consider what they've been through and take the gentle approach. Use the curved end of the shepherd's staff and try to guide them into line, not beat on them. That's just not fair. It's cruel to treat them that way.

As I mentioned, the lesson of the bulls is that this starts off with us needing thirteen bulls to atone for sin, and it gets better as we go forward throughout this timeframe. What we

need to understand are the generational effects that will take place. We're taking a broad view of this whole situation.

To look at that, we can learn some interesting lessons from Ancient Israel and their transition from slavery into pursuing the Promised Land. I realize that these two examples are not exactly the same, but we can see similarities and learn some interesting lessons on how this may play out if we compare these two.

Ancient Israel was in slavery, and in a very difficult situation. God intervenes, performing miracles to take them to a much more positive situation. It's similar in a broad, general sense, to the people who have come through the day of the Lord and are now being brought to the Millennium.

With the description of the earth during the Millennium, they're being brought to a land flowing with milk and honey, you might say. If you look at how they responded and how they went through this process, again in general, we can learn some important lessons from this.

Turn to Exodus, chapter 1. To summarize the context here, as we know, Joseph got thrown into a well by his brothers, he ends up eventually in Egypt, he rises to power as the number two person in Egypt, right under Pharaoh. Eventually, his father and brothers move into the area and the sons of Israel are then in Egypt. Over time, the population grows. Later, the situation changes after that Pharaoh dies, and the new Pharaoh isn't familiar with Joseph's history. He then sees this growing population of the Israelites as a political threat. They could wind up siding with Egypt's enemies and be a threat.

Exodus 1:8. *Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.*

9) And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we;

10) come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land."

11) Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens.

And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.

12) But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

13) So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.

14) And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor. (NKJV)

Notice this word "rigor." We don't typically use this word in our day-to-day conversations. To clarify this, the Hebrew word is "perek," Strong's number 6531. According to the Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament, it's defined as: *A masculine noun referring to ruthlessness, cruelty. It refers to a manner in which*

something is carried out. Israel was made to labor without mercy, cruelly by Egypt. In other words, cruelty in this harsh, severe environment was all this generation of Israelites had ever experienced. By the time we get to Moses being sent to lead Israel out of all of this into the Promised Land, you're now dealing with a people that is going back multiple generations where slavery has been the experience. These people have grown up from childhood with this being all they've ever known and it has shaped their whole world and their view of things.

Let's also notice how this affected their ability to have faith in God, to even believe the promises that He is bringing to them. This environment and how it shaped their world made them rather resistant to listening to what Moses had to say when he told them that God was going to deliver them out. We can see that in Exodus, chapter 6. Here is a conversation that God is having with Moses, saying, "Go tell the children of Israel what the plan is for them." We will read this and then I want you to focus on the peoples' reaction and the reason stated for their reaction.

Exodus 6:1. *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."*

2) *And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD.*

3) *I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them.*

4) *I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.*

5) *And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.*

6) *Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.*

7) *I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*

8) *And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'" (NKJV)*

Notice He's giving them a lot of positive promises. They've been through a bad situation and God is saying, "I'm going to make life a lot better for you. This will be good, and you're going to like it." But notice what happens when Moses communicates all of this to Israel.

9) *So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage. (NKJV)*

It's because their whole experience had been shaped by an environment that just wanted to crush them. That's how the Egyptians treated them. These promises were given, but the Israelites didn't want to hear it.

If you notice throughout Israel's history, not only what happened here, but as this story plays out, they actually leave Egypt and pass through the Red Sea, but every time a difficulty comes up, they say, "God's going to kill us. There's not enough graves in Egypt. He's going to kill us with thirst. No, He's going to kill us with hunger. He's going to kill us with the giants in the land." They had a pessimistic attitude in spite of all the miracles they witnessed.

The first couple of plagues in Egypt, the Israelites experienced as well, but they were protected from all the rest of the plagues. They watched God do these things to the Egyptians. God built some credibility with the Israelites because everything He said, He actually did. Then they leave and they spoiled all the Egyptians, as God had said. The track record is going pretty good. Now they head to the Red Sea and they're trapped there, but then the sea parts and they go over on dry land. Then God drowns Pharaoh's army. After that, food rains from the sky six days a week. They are constantly being taken care of by God. At this point you start noticing that God is establishing a good track record with the Israelites. However, what's their attitude? They get up to the edge of the Promised Land, they send out some spies to scope out the area. They come back and say, "There's giants in the land, and we're all going to die!" So, they all take that attitude. It costs them the Promised Land.

You know how the story ends. God doesn't let them go in, and they had to wander in the wilderness for forty years until most of them died off. They all died with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. Let's look at the generational effect here. The only ones who lived through this (with a couple of exceptions, as I mentioned) were age twenty and under. Depending on your age, you had minimal experience in this whole environment of cruel slavery. The rest of the population has been born during the forty years they had wandered. The next generation was a lot more successful, because their whole world has been shaped by their environment wandering in the wilderness. They're not in the harsh environment that had existed back in Egypt. I'm not saying they fully obeyed God either, but they start following God's instructions, go into the Promised Land and begin conquering the area, and are better at following God's instructions than the first generation where they kept saying, "We're all going to die." You can see how this shaped their experience. The next generation were moving in a positive direction.

That's the point I want to make here. You start off in the Millennium with thirteen bulls to atone for sin, because you're dealing those who have come through the day of the Lord. They're pretty resistant in their perspective of dealing with this. Over time, people start coming around. Now you have another generation raised in the millennial environment, but they are parented by the people who have just come through the experience of the day of the Lord and a culture that despises good.

You can see how this starts moving in a positive direction, generation from generation. There are a few basic principles that I'm sure we're all familiar with biblically, that explain the dynamics of how this will happen.

Proverbs 22:6. *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (NKJV)*

This does not take away free moral agency. This doesn't mean if you do a great job raising a child, they're always going to make good decisions, they will always be obedient and will never go off course. It's saying that the environment a person is raised in will shape their world and has a lasting effect on them for the rest of their life. It's stated here in a positive context. For that to be true, then the opposite must also be true. If you train them up in the way they should not go, that's going to leave a lasting impact on them as well.

There's also a multi-generational effect that we need to understand. The following scripture is in the context of the commandment against idolatry, but there's a statement made in the middle of this that I want you to notice.

Exodus 20:4. *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;*

5) you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, [notice this] visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6) but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (NKJV)

Notice He mentions, *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations*. There are generational effects that take place in terms of what shapes a person's world, how they shape the next generation, etc.

Again, this brings us back to the lessons of the bulls. When you see how it starts off on day one, you have thirteen bulls, and it keeps decreasing as we go forward. As we saw in Leviticus, this is the general atonement for sin. The symbolism here teaches us that there's basically more need for atonement for sin, therefore more sin, at the beginning of this period, and it steadily decreases as we go forward. That first generation is going to have a hard time, and that is understandable. As we go forward with each generation, getting further away from a world dominated by Satan and more towards people that are shaped by being raised in a Godly environment, and being taught God's way, it will become more positive. That's the lesson this is teaching us.

A major responsibility of our role during this time of the Millennium when it's actually fulfilled, (if we're successful in overcoming and be a part of God's kingdom), we're going to be serving as kings and priests, judging these people. Would you want to be judged by a totally unrealistic standard? Let's say you were an athlete and you played basketball, and you're good at it, but you're not Michael Jordan. Would you want someone judging you, expecting you to perform like Michael Jordan? That's a setup for failure, isn't it? Think about it like this; to walk into this environment in the Millennium,

with that first generation with all they've been through, and then judging them from a prospective that they're supposed to have an instantaneous transformation. They're supposed to just jump in line and immediately embrace everything without any difficulty. That's similar to what was done to Ancient Israel when they were in slavery. "We're going to cut off your supply of straw, and we want you to produce the same number of bricks that you were making before, and we're going to punish you if you don't." It's a setup for failure and downright cruel.

To be able to do the job that we have in our future, we need to have a realistic view of this, so we are judging these people fairly and helping them to come in line with God's instructions, not just expecting them to immediately get in line and not have any difficulties. They're going to have some difficulties.

So, brethren, as we prepare for this time, and to get ourselves ready to fulfill this role, let's learn the lesson of the bulls in Numbers 29, and develop a realistic view of the Millennium.